

## Curios in the Window of the Show-Shop

## The Reviewing Stand

By ALEXANDER WOOLL OTT

THE playgoer who lets the weeks slip by without seeing "The World We Live In," is missing one of the authentic thrills which the present day theater can communicate to the great American spine. It comes toward the end of a play that has its ups and rich and memorable spectacle, and of which the third act is as startling and vivid a scene as we can reasonably expect to behold this season.

"The World We Live In" is the American name for the insect comedy launched by the Brothers Capek in their home town—Prague. It is a play of unrelieved, self-indulgent pessimism, a very ory and spree of melancholy, yet understandable enough. Written in the manner of the old fables, it moralizes over human beings by telling the tale of them in terms of the butterflies, the beetles, the moths, the ants. Into the greedy, selfish, quarrelsome, grotesquely brief lives of the insects, we are conducted by a morose human onlooker—a vagrant who, having spent four years studying Latin and four years warring under his country's flag, is now somewhat sourly at ease because the world expects him either to sweep streets or starve. Modestly he escorts us through the insect realms, a resentful Vergil, playing guide in an earthly inferno.

This chorus to the tragedy is so scornful of the wastrel butterflies, the pretty bourgeois crickets and the mean, fatuous, manure-boarding beetles that, with a shrewd shake of the head, your orthodox playgoer will set down the Brothers Capek as socialists up to no good. But then comes the visit to the Marxian anthill, revealed as the dreariest of all possible worlds.

What a scene it is! Brown, grassless earth. Endless cement walks. Along the horizon, a thicket of factory chimneys that pour their black pall over a most unlovely land. Up and down, up and down, up and down—see the heavy-laden ants toiling ceaselessly in the treadmill of their cheerless existence, a world from which all variety, all color, all aspiration has been banished as unutilitarian. One—two—three—four. One—two—three—four. It is the blind ant counting—the blind ant that beats time for the workers like a human metronome set at the center of the world. One—two—three—four. One—two—three—four. Up and down, up and down. An efficiency ant rushes on with an idea. If the count were changed to one—two—four, one—two—four, the ants might move faster. Why should they? Oh, so that production might be increased. Why increased? Oh, in the interests of Progress, in the interests of the Whole, in the interests of the Nation, of the State, to the beautiful end that the Black Ants should be greater than the Yellow Ants, greater than all the ants, greater and greater and greater. One—two—four, one—two—four, one—two—four.

Then uproar. War is threatened. War on the Yellow Ants. War for control of the land between the birch and the pine tree, for the road between two blades of grass. War is declared. Such a scurry, such a docile exchange of overalls for uniforms, such an endless marching away of regiments. One—two—four, one—two—four. Up on the high, safe, comfortable platform, the Dictator watches, issuing orders and decorations and statements to the press. Is a division wiped out? "Ha! According to our plan!" Replacements fall in line. One—two—four, one—two—four. You should hear him snatching reports of victory from the very facts of retreat. You should hear him thanking and rewarding God for the bloody little successes of his dear troops. Why, in one spasm of special graciousness, he even commissions God as a colonel in his army. One—two—four, one—two—four, while the wounded and dying are toted past, while the welfare workers squeal and pass the hat, while the fresh troops climb into uniform and march away to war. One—two—four, one—two—four, one—two—four. Thus, in stabbing pictures that have the nightmare outlines and hues of posters and in the sharp, savage sentences of the headline writers, the Brothers Capek say their say. All of which you will find beautifully produced on the stage the Shuberts reared as a platform for Al Jolson. A strange place, Broadway.

The first act—the butterfly scene—is a pretty, green and pink bore. Partly because it was ruthlessly fumigated for the American taste, partly because the actresses engaged to be the butterflies all have shrill and fatiguing voices, partly because it is a study of eroticism and so many of our plays are just that, this momentous importation begins as though it were not much more than one of the lesser ballets from our own music halls. The fumigation process was largely devoted to deleting the sundry perversions which the Capeks enjoyed staging for the amusement of the folks in Prague. Now the act is largely devoted to the mere maunderings of a latter-day Bunthorne, who in his round of lovelomaking goes through the familiar stages of poetical development as we see it around us here every day. He is a butterfly poetaster, who progresses from the verses written for his college monthly in his senior year to the verses he sends in to his most lenient column conductor and thence goes on till he is writing as much like Gertrude Stein as possible. He starts in this vein:

When I plead with you, my dear,  
Do not put me off with reasons.  
Let us lie and watch the year,  
Laughing at the timid seasons.  
Winter fears the spring's first call,  
Spring avoids the summer weather;  
Autumn brings the flaming fall,  
So, love, let us fall together.

Then he breaks forth as follows:

Oh, fragile and fluttering Iris,  
You sip at the sweets of my soul  
A dream that is dark as desire is,  
My glory, my grandeur, my goal!  
Oh, pain that is priceless as passion,  
A passion as perfect as pain.  
Let us burn in the blaze till we're ashen  
Again—and again—and again!

But of course, one can't stop at that. One goes on. One resorts



The Ant Hill in "The World We Live In."  
From a drawing by Lucie R. Bayler.



MARGALO GILLMORE  
who is coming to the Comedy  
Theater Tuesday evening in  
Milne's "Romantic Age." This  
is the first of a series of draw-  
ings by C. Leroy Baldridge  
which will appear from time  
to time on this page.

to such violent measures as these:

Crash!  
You clash at the doors of my heart!  
Your hair pours into my blood  
Like a flood of yellow thunder.  
Under the roaring, crumpled skies  
Your eyes,  
Two drunken nuns,  
Are singing hymns to fever.  
Your limbs are levers  
Lifting the laughter of the world.  
Hurl the light backward with abandon!  
Command me, drive me with the whips of love!  
Until your lips, brooding on mine,  
Grow rude and rash.  
Crash!

And the last stages are represented in the following verses:

Tomatoes are uncouth but honest  
A sudden slice changes decaying weeds  
Dining in west and extra leaves are sullen  
A green acre is so selfish and yet so pure.

Spread out for pink and purple platitudes  
The moon is bitter diamonds in a ditch  
While stars jump up and down like angry gnats  
A virgin caterpillar shrieks for the embraces of the moon  
I am that caterpillar.

It has no title—this, "Heart-Foam," probably. All these parodies, by the way, were written by Louis Untermeyer, quaintly disclosed in the first-night program as Luis Untemeyo.

## The Week's Grist

THE week just past brought sundry entertainments with it. First came "The Forty-niners," which, through slovenly management, made the disastrous though not unprecedented mistake of opening its doors before its due time. The morning after its indescribably melancholy and mortuary premiere its Balfeff was jettisoned and swallowed up by the whale of private life. This was May Irwin. She had landed in an airy, insubstantial little show like a safe dropped in the firemen's net. Into her place jumped Marc Connelly, who is half of a very good playwright. This change and several conspicuous excisions brightened the bill into a reasonably entertaining program, delightful in spots—a mildly frolicsome evening, justifying neither cheers nor abuse. Yet, since it was written by the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh wits of their time, it ought to be recorded that it can be a source of pride to none of them. Not one did his best for it. Not one.

The same night brought "Up She Goes" to the Playhouse, a musical comedy made from Craven's "Too Many Cooks." Our scouts report it as highly enjoyable.

Then, on Tuesday, came "Rain"—a vivid, violent and uncommonly dramatic piece fashioned from a recent story by Somerset Maugham. In a Samoan way-station, during an imprisoning deluge, this play stages a repellent, ironical and startling duel between a frightened runaway harlot in flight from the San Francisco police and an evangelical missionary whom the playwrights and the actor present as a quivering mass of long suppressed desire. Their paths cross. He tried to scourge her into godliness and decorum and self-abasement. The final curtain leaves him bleeding on the rocks by the Pago Pago shore—self-slain.

The stormy role of the girl is convincingly and brilliantly acted by Jeanne Eagels, to whom this play is a great occasion.

## Addenda

COUNSEL for the defense will now be heard in the following letter we have received from Hugh Walpole:

May I send in an eleventh hour protest against your notice of Austin Strong's play "Seventh Heaven"? I would not venture to say anything were it not that I feel that you have been unjust in this case on the old debatable ground of the realism of art, that

you have scolded Mr. Strong as though he should have written in this a sequel to the "Hairy Ape" or a companion piece to "Jane Clegg."

Mr. Strong is not, I think, in this play attempting to be like real life as you and I know it, but rather transmuting his own sense of life into something that will speak poetically for life rather than exactly represent it. Of course, his play is sentimental, romantic, fantastic. So are "Dear Brutus," "Hannele," "The Tin Soldier," every fairy story ever breathed in a nursery. The dialogue between the boy and the girl at the beginning of the second act seemed to be a beautiful bit of fairy story and the end of the second act was the real defeat of the Wicked Fairy splendidly presented.

Such a defence does not excuse errors of fact, but as a matter of history, were we not uncertain as to whether there was a war one half hour and marching away another?

And is an Englishman more absurd as a Frenchman than an American?

We feel that the main point covered by Mr. Walpole's letter lies in undebatable ground. We should like to answer his last question, however. Is an Englishman more absurd as a Frenchman than an American? Of course he is—when the play is being acted by American actors for an American audience. It is a halting and discordant accent breaking into the unnoticed, matter-of-course idiom of the performance. Here in "Seventh Heaven" was a fine old Parigot of a coach, looking as if he had stepped right out of *Punch* and sounding as if he might pause any moment to ejaculate: "Art a mo, mon dieu, art a mo!"

In advertising his delightful play at the Princess, Brock Pemberton took occasion last Monday to announce that not only had his play enthralled such lofty and glacially intellectual critics as your correspondent, but that Charles Wagner's barber had so raved about it that all his clients were coming to see it. This elicited the following crushing letter to Mr. Pemberton:

I saw the first performance of "Six Characters in Search of an Author," and the comedy struck me as being an idea so novel that I cannot recall a parallel in the history of the theater!

While I watched and listened to the interpretation of your excellent company I was afraid lest your audience would not respond to the demands of the author, but to my surprise it did. And I am thankful to it, as I am to Mr. Charles Wagner for having quoted my ravings to you.

I am the barber whose intellectual enjoyment was a little above that of some of your patrons that night.

I have known Luigi Pirandello in his novels and I appreciate the irony mingled with wit.

When an audience applauds "Six Characters in Search of an Author" it means the time has matured when an artist of your courage may dare to produce the impossible.

Do not be surprised if some day I may come along with a play. I write verses now. I have been writing English one year and no one has taught me. I still belong to obscurity. It is well for you to know that in the Italian colony of New York there is an element that in future is going to have something to say in the intellectual life of this great city.

Thus Joseph Caulea of the barber shop in the Hotel Commodore.

To add to our growing collection of capsule criticisms one actor sends in what he thinks should be the caption over the announcement that Clare Kummer's new comedy "Pomero's Past" has closed for repairs. He suggests: "Kummer Cropper." Sort of mean of him.

Recently Grant Mitchell chanced to be a fellow usher with Douglas Fairbanks at a wedding in the Little Church Around the Corner. He felt perfectly free to get out of step or fall down or anything, and explained his lighthearted irresponsibility by telling the tale of the little ingenue who once played with Rose Coghlan. At the beginning of the second act they were to come down the grand staircase together, arm in arm, and one night, just as the curtain was rising the little ingenue whispered in terror: "Oh, my dear Miss Coghlan, whatever shall I do? My skirt is coming down!" At which painful tidings the great lady batted never an eyelid nor stayed at all her regal descent. "Never mind, my dear," she muttered as the curtain rose, "no one will be looking at YOU!"

## The Talk of Broadway

By FRANK VREELAND

THERE is much that is unusual about the new vehicle in which Mrs. Fliske is to appear—a banal statement that is as good a way as any to introduce

"Paddy," the piece in which Mrs. Fliske will vibrate in Rochester on November 20. For one thing, Mrs. Fliske has at last joined forces with George C. Tyler, a friend of long standing, under whose management she had long felt the urge to appear.

However, they seemed unable to combine for the good of the drama until this year. Then, it seems, as they were discussing possible plays for Mrs. Fliske one day, in walked none other than Miss Lillian Barrett, the authoress of Mrs. Fliske's next play—though they didn't recognize her as such immediately. But Miss Barrett straightway announced that she had written a play, that Tyler could have it, but that unless Mrs. Fliske, and only Mrs. Fliske, appeared in it, Miss Barrett would hurl it back into oblivion again. No sooner said than, as it were, done—possibly to save Miss Barrett the trouble of hauling.

Now comes a third exceptional point in this saga of the Fliske play. Harrison Grey Fliske states that Miss Barrett is a novelist, but to date nobody around the Tyler office has proved sufficiently erudite to name any of her works.

A fourth unusual point is that the central character is one altogether new to Mrs. Fliske, despite the fact that she might have seemed to have played about every character possible in a stage catalogue. She is to portray a Virginia gentlewoman who has gone to pieces physically, morally and financially—several makes it seem like a "Declassee" every year older.

"The Bootleggers," the drama of prohibition's undercurrents on Broadway by William A. Page, will follow Mme. Cedille Sorel and the French drama at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater during the week of November 20. Madison Corey, who is making the presentation, is said to have guaranteed the production for four weeks, and there certainly would seem to be enough run runners in New York to make the play last that long, at least. The idea for the play is rumored to have had its inception in the famous

ice box on which Page founded his publicity for the managers during the actors' strike.

No preparations have so far been made for sending out a company of "Ben Hur," and it begins to look as if there will be no road tour this season, just as there wasn't last year, because conditions out of town looked discouraging even for such a hardy perennial as the Lew Wallace classic. Possibly the dolorous prospect in the provinces this year may again be acting as an inhibition on A. L. Erlanger.

Last year was the first time that a company had not gone out—almost as far back, you might say, as the memory of man could reach. A season without "Ben Hur" seemed just as normal as a season without a little moonshine licker down South. Originally the arrangement of Erlanger with the Wallace estate compelled him to send it out for a certain number of weeks in order to hold the rights to it, but now that he owns it outright, the manager can keep the production in this city, safe from the evil eye of the road.

A play called "Virtue," with Pauline Armitage, is to follow "East Side, West Side" as the transient guest at the Nora Bayes. It was written by Everett Moosa, a lawyer with offices in the Aeolian building, who is also its backer, having guaranteed it for two weeks in the skyline theater as a vote of confidence in his work.

That leads naturally and easily to the comment that lawyers often seem to turn instinctively toward the stage, which again leads to a story about two lawyers. The young legal facets of a Western city wanted desperately to go on the stage—so desperately they were willing to cast their talent upon vaudeville. They got Addison Burkhardt, author of numerous variety sketches, to write an act for them, and finally obtained a tryout booking from some manager who had confidence in the whole human race.

As they were rehearsing for this auspicious event the stage director kept turning his head from one to the other abruptly while they barked out their lines. At the end of their first rehearsal they said plaintively to the director: "You don't like us."

"Why?" he asked.

"Well," they replied, "you keep shaking your head while we're talking."

"Not at all," he said. "That's because I'm trying to look at you both and you're too far apart at opposite ends of the stage. Get together!"

But the director had an unconscious premonition. For when they opened instead of being a landslide they were a cave-in. After the second try-out performance of these two young attorneys who had turned for an easy living to the stage, the booking manager called to them as they came off: "Court opens at 9 A. M. to-morrow!"

"The Masked Woman" begins rehearsals on November 20, with Helen MacKellar in form for it after having gone into training with a stock company in Toledo.

A. H. Woods has shied away from the production of "Gr-Gri," the musical comedy by the late C. M. S. McLellan, with score by Paul Lincke, with which Woods, like W. A. Brady, was to have broken a vow to remain free of musical comedy after many years. Woods severed his connection with the piece which the playwright's brother, George McLellan, was handling over here, in characteristic fashion, in the time it took him to clap on his hat.

He was prowling up and down his office, much agitated and muttering to himself: "Here I've got to go to one end of the city to hear voices for it," he was saying, "and Martin Herrman (his brother) has to go to the other. Our time is taken up in talking to scene painters and every one else—"

and it takes so much time I don't know whether I ought to go on with it."

"Well," suggested one of his office force, "why not let the question settle itself by putting on your hat and going to London?"

"That's a good idea," said Woods, and out the door he went. When last heard from the manager had not yet headed for the open sea. But his office force wouldn't have been worried if he had—they knew he would always come back.

The Shuberts may put on this McLellan piece, and there is a bare chance that it will furnish a background for Benny Leonard, the most dramatic of all the pugilists. The lightweight champion has aspirations to be a real actor, and not rely on his fists solely as a means of expressing his soul on the stage. He may yet be hailed as the successor to Richard Mansfield.

Jimmy Hussey, his bosom friend, may appear in the same show with him, as Hussey has closed in Shubert vaudeville and has received a promise from these managers that he would soon be accessible to the public in a new revue.

The history of "Rain," which seems to have brought a flood of patronage to Maxine Elliott's Theater, is worth a moment of your valuable time. John D. Williams brought the original story by W. Somerset Maugham, "Miss Thompson," to Woods before it had been translated into drama. Woods is said to have liked the story, but grew languid about the project when Williams asked for a half interest in the play.

Williams also carried the story to Gilbert Miller, by whom, as head of Charles Frohman, Inc., Williams has been engaged as general press representative after having let the theatrical game alone for a season. Miller also failed to brighten over it.

Then Sam H. Harris decided to take a chance and not only gave Williams a half interest in the play but put his name on the program as having staged it, though Williams's major contribution to the proceedings was that of turning up the treasure. He procured John Colton, author of "Drifting" or "Cassie Cook of the Yellow Sea," who has roamed a good part of his life through those Oriental regions, to dramatize it, with the collaboration of Clemence Randolph, who, by the way, is to be thought of as Miss Randolph. Eugene Walter was called upon as consulting expert during the tryout down in Philadelphia to determine if there were any leakages, but hardly any patching was done.

Somewhat the same peddling experience was encountered by the story "Mr. Billings Spends His Dime," in which Wallace Reid is making his eyebrows ready for the screen. A theatrical man got hold of the advance proofs of this story by Dana Burnett before it was published in magazine form and hawked it about in the Pacific coast film studios, offering to take \$2,500 for it if somebody would only fall on his neck with that sum. After he met with nothing but discouragement, the film rights reverted to the author and Burnett succeeded in selling it to Famous Players-Lasky—to whom it had previously been offered—for \$7,500.

The removal of "Thin Ice" to the Belmont Theater to-morrow signals two facts which may or may not be vital in the life of every playgoer. One is that "A Clean Town," originally destined for this house, will have to be held out of town while it is renovated, and the other is that "The Hayseed," the musical comedy which E. Ray Goetz was planning to produce and which seemed to have a chance to make a fight for life at this theater, will have to stake out a claim elsewhere.



This is NOT our Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, but merely Bobby Clark, chief cutup of the current goings on at the Music Box.